



Archdiocese of Birmingham

Section 48 Inspection Report

HOLY CROSS CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Part of the St John Paul II Catholic Multi Academy Company
Laburnum Drive, Walmley, Sutton Coldfield, B76 2SP

Inspection dates: 17-18 February 2022
Lead Inspector: Jean Richmond

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS: **Good**

Catholic Life: Outstanding

Religious Education: Good

Collective Worship: Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection: Outstanding

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

This is a Good Catholic school because:

- Catholic Life, led by the passionate and dedicated executive principal together with her effective senior leadership team and the inspirational parish priest ensure that all areas of Catholic Life are given the highest priority, resulting in a faith-filled community.
- The executive principal and staff are exemplary role models, they communicate their faith through their care and love of their children. Their supportive relationships model themselves on Christ, enabling Holy Cross school to be fully inclusive, providing outstanding pastoral care to pupils.
- Praying together is part of the daily experience for all pupils and staff. School leaders and the parish priest treat their responsibility to lead and model best practice in Collective Worship with very great importance. Pupils display reverence and respect during Collective Worship; the beautiful singing, especially at Mass, greatly enhances worship.
- It works closely with all schools in the multi academy company, and with the parish, creating a faith-filled close-knit community.

It is not yet Outstanding because:

- Pupils' opportunities to initiate, plan and lead Collective Worship are not yet embedded throughout the whole school community.
- Leaders and governors must undertake more robust monitoring in all areas of Religious Education that informs further actions and holds staff to account for standards.
- Teachers' feedback doesn't consistently help pupils to deepen their learning in Religious Education.
- Self-evaluation needs to be more detailed and developed further in Religious Education so that it evaluates and evidences all of the school's practices.

FULL REPORT

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Although, due to restrictions, only the chaplaincy team (two or three pupils in each year group) has been leading Collective Worship, all the children now must have the opportunity to be involved in initiating, planning and leading prayer.
- Implement strategic, rigorous, and robust monitoring and evaluation of Religious Education that then informs further actions and holds staff to account for standards.
- Ensure teachers' feedback helps pupils to deepen their learning in Religious Education.
- Develop self-evaluation further in Religious Education so that it evidences and evaluates the work that takes place.

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

The quality of the Catholic Life of the school	Outstanding
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school	Outstanding
The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school	Outstanding
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision of the Catholic Life of the school	Outstanding

CL1 The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school

CL2 The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school

- The children's understanding of their mission statement 'We share in Christ's life so He can guide our thoughts, words and actions' is fully understood, articulated, and lived out by all pupils.

- Pupils have a real appreciation of the Catholic faith; they are proud to be in a Catholic school and fully accept their responsibilities of living in a faith filled community.
- The behaviour and attitude of all pupils is always exemplary. They are quick to appreciate everything, including the immense care that is provided in school. A pupil in Year 1 was able to speak to inspectors about how the behaviour policy would be implemented to resolve any issues that may arise.
- Pupils lead prayers, readings, aspects of all kinds of fundraising, and many other leadership roles such as Mini Vinnies, eco ambassadors, house captains, playground buddies. The school also has sixty-three altar servers. Throughout the school, there is a real understanding of the importance of service amongst pupils.
- Pupils actively participate in many opportunities the school provides such as visits, retreats and even visiting the memorial in Walmley. Members of the public commented on how impressed they were with the children of Holy Cross visiting the memorial and speaking eloquently about the area's past, showing their respect for others.
- Pupils value the chaplaincy team however, due to Covid restrictions only just being lifted, more children are hopeful of leading prayer within school.
- The school's excellent Catholic ethos is reflected in the positive attitudes of pupils and the high level of support and care given by all the staff for their pastoral, spiritual, moral, and ethical development.
- Governors, parents, and pupils speak enthusiastically about the school. A governor and a teaching assistant both moved their children to Holy Cross because of the care, love and value that is given to every child in the school.
- Relationships, sex, and health education (RHSE) is taught through the TenTen programme 'Live Life to the Full', which is consistent with the teachings of the Church. It is thorough and developed at an appropriate level for all pupils. This enables pupils to explore feelings and emotions and how they impact on themselves and others. Teaching is rooted in a Catholic understanding of the human person and what the Church teaches in relation to personal responsibility and the dignity of the person.
- The vast majority of children can identify the sort of person God is calling them to be. The school has celebrated a 'vocations week,' however, staff fully understand that this needs to be embedded throughout the whole life of school so children are well prepared to accept God's calling both for now and for adult life.
- All the children are thoroughly proud of their school, their church and their faith and beliefs. Most of all, they are proud that they have the love of God and they are part of God's community.
- Catholic Life at Holy Cross is given the highest priority resulting in a nurturing Catholic ethos with a strong sense of community at all levels. It is a welcoming school, starting with the staff in the office through to the senior leadership team, together with all the staff, teaching and non-teaching, resulting in a joyful community.
- A strength of the school is that the parish, school, governing body, and home all work together and actively participating in Catholic Life, fully supporting the school's mission statement.
- Holy Cross is a prayerful, faith filled community. As a result, pupils actively talk about prayer. The parish priest is an inspiration to the staff and children, leading the community to a life with Christ at the centre.
- The school environment greatly enhances the school's mission and Catholic identity. There is a rich variety of different displays depicting the liturgical seasons and feasts and showing respect for other faiths not represented in the school.

- The staff enthusiastically participate in school activities which reflect the Catholic Life and mission of the school. They are exemplary role models to the pupils.
- All staff feel valued due to the pastoral care given to all by the executive principal, the senior leadership team and parish priest. Father is fully involved in supporting any new staff, especially if non-Catholic, to ensure they feel part of this Catholic community. New staff speak about the discreet support they had been given. As a result, all staff are fully committed to the mission of the school.

CL3 How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision of the Catholic Life of the school Commitment

- Governors are strong members of the school and parish community, they are passionate, dedicated, and proactive.
- Monitoring and evaluation for Catholic Life takes place through learning walks and professional conversations. As the parish priest and the governing body are fully involved in all Catholic Life, they are fully aware of the strengths and any areas of development.
- The parish priest, a former teacher and previous chair of the board of directors of the multi academy company, works very closely with the school and meets regularly with senior leadership to discuss and reflect upon many aspects of the Catholic Life. Consequently, he is well informed of developments and makes an input to them.
- Governors have attended Masses, liturgies and assemblies and feed into the monitoring and evaluation of collective worship.
- Staff new to school receive a thorough induction, some of which is in-house, provided by the parish priest and subject leader who has excellent subject knowledge. Together with the many diocesan courses they attend, they receive good continuing professional development (CPD) relating to Catholic education.
- Parents have a strong partnership with good access to and input into the Catholic Life of the school. They feel well supported and listened to. They speak highly of the teaching staff and the executive principal. The parents stated, 'the staff here practise what they teach', demonstrating their discipleship to Christ.
- Parents of children in the early years foundation stage (EYFS) are invited to an introduction or consolidation to the Catholic faith. They are encouraged to attend Mass, alongside parishioners, where reception class pupils are blessed, this encourages the families to feel part of the Church. Sacramental year groups are also invited to meetings and commitment Masses as part of the sacramental preparation, ensuring all parents understand the commitment their children and parents/carers are making.
- There are strong and effective partnerships in place between the school and the parish and its priest. They work in partnership with the school and provide quality catechesis for both pupils and staff.
- Many members of the governing body, especially the parish priest, have a wealth of experience of working in Catholic schools, being so fully involved in Catholic Life that they are ready to challenge as well as provide effective support, whenever necessary.
- The school works well to develop its provision of spiritual, moral, social, cultural, and vocational (SMSCV) education. The dedicated executive principal together with the parish priest, supported by the senior leadership team and the link governor, work as a team to ensure that the staff at Holy Cross receive the highest quality CPD.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The quality of Religious Education	Good
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education	Good
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education	Good
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for Religious Education	Good

RE1 How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education**RE2 The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in Religious Education**

- The school has identified that children enter with very low starting points and make very good progress in EYFS, however, this is not always reflected in their work throughout the school.
- The girls achieve higher than the boys in the vast majority of year groups, especially when pupils achieve a greater depth of understanding. The numbers present in other pupil groups are small, meaning it is not possible to comment on patterns in their performance.
- Many lessons begin with meditation: the pupils sit very quietly, pray, and reflect spiritually. Their subject knowledge is at least good, these children use this knowledge to reflect and think theologically and ethically.
- Most pupils participate and enjoy their Religious Education lessons. They approach their lessons with interest and enthusiasm and respond well to opportunities which extend their learning. In every class the inspectors saw different teaching strategies being used such as drama, discussion, and reflection. All staff start with prior learning, ensuring all the pupils consolidate their previous lesson and are ready to move on. A particularly impressive lesson was seen by inspectors in Year 3, in which pupils were researching some of the teachings of New Testament. The children were asked to reflect upon the scripture, searching for any messages that were given and then deciding how this would impact on their daily lives.
- The children are committed to improving their knowledge, understanding and skills. Due to teachers using a wide variety of activities in Religious Education lessons all pupils are enthusiastic in RE lessons. All the pupils know that RE is a special lesson.
- The quality of written work and standards in Religious Education is good. Following the pandemic, leaders have recognised the need to focus on writing across the whole school. In Religious Education, the consistency of the volume of work from one year group to another also needs to be addressed.
- Staff are confident in their subject knowledge and there is dedicated time prioritised when staff can access support from the subject leader, should they require clarification of a topic before they teach it.
- A variety of resources, including ICT, is used to make lessons interesting and to fully engage all pupils. During the inspection an interesting lesson took place in EYFS in which the teacher acted out a miracle to bring the story to life, and another in which the Year 6 teacher referred to her own life as an example of being a witness to the Catholic faith. Consequently, pupils enjoy their Religious Education lessons.
- Teachers' use of questioning is generally good throughout the majority of lessons however, the questioning in books doesn't always move the children forward with their thinking.

- The quality of teacher feedback depends on the year group; some year groups are better than others. All teachers' must ensure that giving effective and quality feedback will help pupils to deepen their learning.
- Resources are well used. Teaching assistants are well prepared and teach well during group work sessions. However, on occasions, they need to take more of an active role in the preliminary part of the lesson during whole class teaching.
- All the classes had large 'I wonder books' alongside their personal exercise books, which evidence the work children have completed on prayer, social teaching, the Catholic Schools Pupil Profile (CSPP), Remembrance Sunday, saints etc. It is clear they are a source of pride for the children in relation to the whole aspect of Religious Education.
- Teachers consistently plan good lessons linked to pupils' current assessment so that most pupils learn well. As a result of this, teaching is mainly good.
- Most teachers manage time well to secure good learning in lessons and across sequences of lessons.

RE3 How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for Religious Education

- The school follows the prescribed curriculum 'Learning and Growing as the People of God' and lessons are not blocked together; as such leaders ensure that the additional requirements of the Archbishop of Birmingham in relation to Religious Education are being met.
- Religious Education meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference, as all pupils receive their allocation of timetabled lessons.
- The standards in Religious Education compare favourably to English.
- The subject leader has been in post for a number of years. His subject knowledge is excellent and he uses this to support staff to ensure the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is at least good.
- The link governor, who is also the parish priest, is very proactive in monitoring, especially elements of Catholic Life. However, the Religious Education subject leader must undertake more rigorous monitoring to accurately know the school's Religious Education strengths and areas for development.
- The multi academy company has undertaken joint learning walks and lesson observations, this supports the senior leadership team with their findings.
- Teachers reflect on their own teaching; they acknowledge their strengths and are willing to ask for support when necessary. However, it is imperative the subject leader plans and schedules all the monitoring activities that need to take place throughout the year with rigour, accuracy, and robust evaluations. Any concerns found from this monitoring must be acted upon quickly.
- Leaders and governors ensure Religious Education is planned using the recommended diocesan scheme to meet the needs of pupils.
- When staff need support the executive principal, the parish priest and the subject leader are always available. Staff know that they can trust senior leaders and ask about anything they are unsure of and they will receive practical help that will enable them to improve.
- The Religious Education curriculum meets all the Bishops' Conference requirements. More monitoring of the work completed in Religious Education exercise books must take place, with less reliance placed on the monitoring of the 'I wonder books', which do not always reflect the Religious Education curriculum.

- The majority of pupils are religiously literate and proud of their faith. They are committed to making a difference in society.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

The quality of Collective Worship	Good
How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship	Good
The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school	Outstanding
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship	Good

CW1 How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship

CW2 The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school

- During the celebration of Mass and whole school assemblies, all pupils conduct themselves with reverence and respect. Mass is celebrated weekly; pupils participate enthusiastically in the celebration of the Eucharist using their skills in a variety of ways: servers, readers, clear responses and beautiful singing.
- Inspectors saw a whole school 'Gifts from God' assembly, in which two pupils from each class were celebrated for their gifts; pupils could also bring in any certificates, badges etc. they had achieved recently. Staff spoke eloquently about the children in their class, celebrating their talents connecting it to the CSPP, stressing the importance of virtues and using their talents wisely.
- Pupils' leadership regarding the chaplaincy team for Collective Worship is very well developed, especially in Key Stage 2. They willingly give up break times and lunch times to regularly plan prayer.
- Pupils are proud of their faith and enjoy participating in school masses, Collective Worship and all variety of prayer. Parents are always impressed with their reverence and commitment.
- Pupils' knowledge about prayer and liturgy is good. As a result, most are confident in their knowledge of the Liturgical year and how this is reflected in prayer and liturgy.
- Parents of children in Sacramental year groups are also invited to Sacramental Meetings and Commitment Masses as part of the Sacramental Preparation Programme. The impact of this is that parents can deepen their relationship with God. Parents agree that prayer and liturgy are central in the life of the school.
- The staff meets every week to pray together, and all meetings begin with prayer. All staff have the opportunity to lead prayer. They are good role models for the pupils and the school community as a whole.
- Praying together is a daily experience for all pupils. They are confident when speaking about when they pray and why.
- Inspectors saw pupils taking part in a variety of Collective Worship including the headteacher's assembly and pupil planned class prayer services. During all these times of worship, pupils were active participants.

- Planning of Collective Worship is relevant to the liturgical season or to a particular theme that is relevant at that time.
- The executive principal and the head of school also lead a weekly Gospel assembly where pupils reflect on aspects of the liturgical year.
- Pupils were able to talk confidently about how they make PowerPoints, choose appropriate readings, and compose questions for the pupil led Collective Worship.
- The 'I wonder books' explore contemporary themes about faith in their lives and promote the Catholic virtues. This outlines the mission of the school to all joining the community: parents, pupils and staff.
- Initially, the parish priest encouraged pupils to take part in pupil led Collective Worship to ensure its high profile; currently, a member of staff supports the children.
- Before Covid restrictions, parents and parishioners were invited to attend Collective Worship where the whole community could meet in prayer.
- All staff volunteer to take part in leading prayer, if they are new to school or feel a little daunted support is given ensuring all staff feel part of the community of faith.

CW3 How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship

- Leaders offer staff regular opportunities to receive liturgical formation and training on the planning of Collective Worship.
- All the staff are good role models of practice and live out the school's mission statement.
- The chaplaincy team talks about what prayer means to them and about different types of prayer.
- Any additional requirements of the diocesan Bishop regarding Collective Worship are fully implemented.
- In Mass and in assemblies, pupils are respectful and prayerful. They sing joyfully and join in community prayer appropriately and with confidence.
- Parents are regularly consulted and agree that the Collective Worship provided by the school has a positive impact on the moral and spiritual development of their child.

SCHOOL DETAILS

Unique reference number	140525
Local authority	Birmingham
<i>This inspection was carried out under Canon 806 of Canon Law and under Section 48 of the Education Act (2005).</i>	
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary Aided
Age range	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on roll	210
Appropriate authority	The board of directors
Chair	Maria Stirrop
Headteacher	Teresa Cotter
Telephone number	0121 675 2158
Website address	www.holycross-sch.net
Email address	t.cotter@holycross-sch.net
Date of previous inspection	<i>September 2015</i>

INFORMATION ABOUT THIS SCHOOL

- Holy Cross is a one-form entry Catholic primary school serving the parish of Holy Cross Catholic Church, Walmley, Sutton-Coldfield, Birmingham.
- The percentage of Catholic pupils is currently 97%.
- The percentage of disadvantaged pupils is below the national average.
- The percentage of SEND pupils is below the national average.
- The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic origins is below the national average.
- The percentage of pupils with EAL is below the national average.
- Attainment on entry is below average.
- Any significant changes since the last inspection – e.g., becoming an academy, changes in whole school or RE leadership, governance; form of entry etc.

INFORMATION ABOUT THIS INSPECTION

- The inspection was carried out by two Diocesan Inspectors: Jean Richmond and Karyn Oakley.
- The focus of the inspection was on the impact, quality, and leadership of the school's provision of Catholic Life, Religious Education and Collective Worship.
- The inspectors observed teaching across seven Religious Education lessons to evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. All of these lesson observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- The inspectors completed a work scrutiny and held discussions with pupils to evaluate their understanding of Catholic Life, the impact of Religious Education teaching on their learning over time and their experience of Collective Worship.
- Meetings were held with the chair of the MAC, the Catholic senior executive leader, the Catholic Life link governor, governors, the executive principal, the subject leader for Religious Education, the person in charge of Collective Worship, present head of

school and new head of school, parish priest, some staff, pupils in the Chaplaincy team and pupils not in the Chaplaincy team and parents.

- The inspectors attended a whole school Mass, a whole school assembly, Key Stage 2, Collective Worship and undertook a learning walk to look at aspects of learning and teaching in Religious Education, the presentation of the Catholic Life of the school and pupils' behaviour.
- The inspectors reviewed a range of documents including the school's self-evaluation, data about pupils' attainment and progress, Analyse School Performance (ASP) data, the school development plan, the RE action plan, teachers' planning and wonder books.